

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please add new claims 84 – 98.

SuFF 84. (new) An apparatus, comprising:

means for programming a bit per word size parameter for an egress first-in-first-out (FIFO) buffer and programming a word per egress cell size parameter for said egress FIFO buffer;

means for programming a bit per word size parameter for an ingress first-in-first-out (FIFO) buffer and programming a word per ingress cell size parameter for said ingress FIFO buffer;

means for sending fixed size portions of egress information from said egress FIFO buffer over a first bus to any of a plurality of service modules that are coupled to said first bus, said egress FIFO's programmed bit per word size parameter and word per egress cell size parameter together corresponding to said fixed size of said portions of egress data, each of said fixed size portions of egress information further comprising a label that identifies which service module a particular fixed size portion of egress information is sent to; and

means for sending fixed size portions of ingress information from any of said plurality of service modules over a second bus to said ingress FIFO buffer, said ingress FIFO's programmed bit per word size parameter and word per egress cell size

parameter together corresponding to said fixed size of said portions of ingress data, each of said fixed size portions of ingress information further comprising a label that identifies from which service module a particular fixed size portion of ingress information was sent.

85. (new) The apparatus of claim 84 wherein said fixed size of said portions of egress information is the same as said fixed size of said portions of ingress information.

86. (new) The apparatus of claim 85 wherein said fixed size further comprises 56 bytes.

87. (new) The apparatus of claim 84 further comprising means for counting, with a first count value, the number of words that have been stored into said egress FIFO buffer.

88. (new) The apparatus of claim 87 further comprising means for resetting said first count value to a first reset value if said first count value reaches said word per egress cell size.

89. (new) The apparatus of claim 87 further comprising means for counting, with a second count value, the number of words that have been removed from said egress FIFO buffer.

90. (new) The apparatus of claim 89 further comprising means for resetting said second count value to a second reset value if said second count value reaches said word per egress cell size.

91. (new) The apparatus of claim 89 further comprising means for counting with a third count value and counting with a fourth count value, said counting with a third and fourth count values further comprising:

1) incrementing said third and fourth count values if said first count value reaches said word per egress cell size; and

2) decrementing said third and fourth count values if said second count value reaches said word per egress cell size.

92. (new) The apparatus of claim 91 wherein said counting with a third count value is timed with a first clock that times the removal of words from said egress FIFO buffer and wherein said counting with a fourth count value is timed with a second clock that times the storing of words into said egress FIFO buffer.

93. (new) The apparatus of claim 84 further comprising means for counting, with a first count value, the number of words that have been stored into said ingress FIFO buffer.

94. (new) The apparatus of claim 93 further comprising means for resetting said first count value to a first reset value if said first count value reaches said word per ingress cell size.

95. (new) The apparatus of claim 93 further comprising means for counting, with a second count value, the number of words that have been removed from said ingress FIFO buffer.

96. (new) The apparatus of claim 95 further comprising means for resetting said second count value to a second reset value if said second count value reaches said word per ingress cell size.

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D 97. (new) The apparatus of claim 95 further comprising means for counting with a third count value and counting with a fourth count value, said counting with a third and fourth count values further comprising:

- 1) incrementing said third and fourth count values if said first count value reaches said word per ingress cell size; and
- 2) decrementing said third and fourth count values if said second count values reaches said word per ingress cell size.

98. (new) The apparatus of claim 97 wherein said counting with a third count value is timed with a first clock that times the storing of words into said ingress FIFO buffer and wherein said counting with a fourth count value is timed with a second clock that times the removal of words from said ingress FIFO buffer.